



World Christian Fellowship

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Story of 2 Sons – Part 06

Make your own end

Luke 15:29-32

Luke 15:29-32, *So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'*

³¹ *"And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'* "

What brings the Lord joy?

Recovery of the lost. The salvation of sinners.

The Pharisees and the scribes wanted nothing to do with sinners.

Jesus wanted everything to do with sinners.

These two parables draw the Pharisees in.

Jesus draws them in by making the first two parables questions.

Jesus draws them in as if they were the person in the story. Drawing them into the experience and the thinking of the main character so that they really play the role in their minds.

1. Younger son
2. Father
3. Older son

We have looked at the younger son.

Last 2 weeks we have been looking at the Father.

Loving Father

Restoring Father.

This week we will look at his character as a joyful saviour not a reluctant saviour.

V 11-12, *Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.*

Unbelievable request yet the father grants him his request.

He had no concern for his father.

He gave the property

Younger son used the wealth turn them into cash and walked away.

Prodigal living and wasted all his possessions.

End up in wants.

Goes to the citizen of the country.

Sent to take care of pigs.

Lowest of lowest into his life.

Come back to his senses.

Thinking about the father.

Repented and returned to the father.

Father did 5 amazing things.

1. Saw him in a distance
2. Compassion on him
3. Ran towards him
4. Hugged him
5. Kissed him.

Rehearsed his speech

V 18-19, *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."*

But when he meets the father, he would not let him finish his speech.

V 21, *And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

But his father did another unbelievable thing.

He received him and recognised him by restoring him fully by giving three things.

1. Robe
2. Ring
3. Sandals

We looked in detail that God is not looking for servants but sons.

God is not a reluctant saviour but a joyful Saviour. We saw last week from the life of Manasseh, how God rejoices to save the sinners.

There was a feast to celebrate the Father love, mercy, kindness, and goodness.

V 29, *So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.'*

" So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo,"

Everybody would take a breath there.
Huhhhh!

Younger son said "father" at the beginning when he asked him for his estate.
Even when the prodigal came back and said, "Father,"

You don't address your father, "Lo."
There's no title.
There's no respect.

Then he says, " *these many years I have been serving you;*"
douleuō, slave language, ***doulos***.

"For so many years I have been your slave."
Now there is a legalist mentality.

What it indicates is that in the heart of this elder son:
He has seen this as a horrible, grit-your-teeth, through these years of slugging out slavery.

He was no different than the younger son.
He wanted what he wanted.
He just had a different way to get it.
He didn't have the courage of his younger brother.

He decided to play safe to hang around and wait till the father dies and then get it.

It's all nothing but slavery to him, bitter, resentful, angry for so many years.

Do you want to know the self-image of a hypocrite?

Here it is!

" I never transgressed your commandment at any time."

Wow!

Isn't the language of a self-righteous hypocrite?

Who does he sound like?

Sounds like the rich, young ruler!

Luke 18:18-21, *Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹ So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. ²⁰ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "*

²¹ And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

Here is the proud hypocrite.

Here is the elder brother, who because he has done good is under the illusion that he is good.

Because he has done good for self-satisfaction and pride, he has buried the truth of who he is deep.

Because he has done good for satisfaction and pride as a way to earn salvation, he has pushed it so far down that he can't even touch it any longer.

It's completely buried in his subconscious.

He lives with this illusion that he has never ever neglected a command that his father had given him. There is the amazing self-deception of a hypocrite. He is perfect!

When the elder brother says that I am perfect to his father saying that you are not perfect.

In effect the elder brother is saying that,

- I understand what perfection is.
- I understand what perfect righteousness is
- I understand what perfect justice is
- I know what perfect honour is
- I know how you are supposed to behave

You are in violation of it.

- You took the younger son back,
- You ran toward him,
- you shamed yourself,
- You protected him from shame,

- You forgave him.
- You embraced him.
- You kissed him.
- You gave him full sonship.
- You gave him honour.
- You gave him authority.
- You gave him responsibility.
- You hold this massive celebration for an absolutely unworthy sinner.

I am perfect and you are not!

For the same exact reason Paul went around killing Christians, because he hated grace.

Philippians 3:6, *concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

He lived under the illusion that I was blameless and these Christians with their message of grace were violators of God's holy law. Paul went everywhere he could breathe threatening, imprisoning, and killing them.

He has no love for the father.

He has no interest in the father's love for his younger brother.

He has no desire to share in his father's joy.

He is still perfect and needs no repentance.

How about a classic illustration of a hypocrite?

Angry, bitter, and slave mentality.

He sees himself as perfect and needing no repentance.

Nobody goes into the kingdom of God without repentance. This is classic hypocrisy.

- His heart is wretched.
- His heart is wicked.
- His heart is alienated.
- His heart is selfish.
- He is blind to spiritual reality.

The Pharisees and the scribes are the religious sinner in the house of God.

Making a public display of affection for God,

- wearing clerical garb,
- attending a certain kind of ritual,
- certain religious activities,
- moral on the public front,
- outwardly good,
- outwardly obeying the law,
- keeping all the rules,
- but no relationship to God,
- no concern for the honour of God,
- no joy,

- no understanding of grace.

The son isn't finished.

Elder brother sees his father as a violator of righteous standards of which he is the source and says to him this.

" I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends."

I have been the worker and I don't even get a goat.

He's done nothing for you, and he gets the fattened calf.

- This is not fair.
- This is not equitable.
- This is not just.
- This is not righteous.

What the elder son is really saying?

Father, I don't need to ask you for forgiveness. I haven't done anything.

But I will tell you something, you need to ask me for forgiveness for what you've done.

That is the outrage of hypocrisy.

That is the outrage of legalism.

It demands that God forgive us for a violation of our understanding.

He thinks the father needs to ask him for forgiveness.

The Pharisees are going to identify with him. This is outrageous conduct by the father. The father is the culprit.

The father is the bad person here.

The younger son is a bad person.

The father is the one who has completely violated all conventional standards of respect and honour.

"you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends."

My friends.

Elder son is accusing the father of favouritism.

But he is also pointing out the fact that when he has a party, it's not going to include his brother and it's not going to include his father.

- He lives in a completely different world.
- He has a completely different group of friends.
- He is at home, but he has no relationship to the family.
- All his friends are outside the family.

- He parties with those who think the way he thinks.
- He parties with those who have no connection to the father.
- He doesn't understand the father's love, compassion, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and joy.
- He has no fellowship with the father.
- He is angry, resentful, jealous, envious, impenitent, and greedy.
- He thinks he has worked as a slave so long and he got nothing.

When he does get what he wants, it's not going to be a celebration with the family because he has no relationship to them. His father is nothing more than a slave master.

He is going to have his party with his friends. Jesus so cleverly describes the Pharisees who associated only with themselves.

This is the time when the elder brother wishes the father were dead.

If his father was just dead, all of this would be over.

If his father was just dead, then he would possess everything, and he could start the party with his own buddies.

Get the father out of the picture and everything is good, everything is as it should be, everything is honourable again.

V 30, *But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'*

He carries on a further assault on his father's character, integrity, and virtue.

How did he know?

How did he know that he had used all that money with harlots?

Because Jesus said he knew in the story.

Just a little insight that tells us more about the behaviour of the elder son in the story. Of course, these characters that Jesus has fabricated.

So here is something contrasted against a celebration that's stark. We have got a celebration going on with music, dancing and the younger son and the feast of joy. Out in the dark of the night we have got this horrific assault going on and the older brother is attacking the virtue, the integrity, the character of his father.

All that the elder son had kept in for all those years explodes out of him. All that fake respect and honour is gone.

The cover is blown. While they are all inside honouring that father, he is on the outside heaping contempt on him.

This is the Pharisees.

- They saw themselves as righteous.
- They saw themselves as just.
- They therefore sat in judgment on God in Christ and they condemned Jesus for His mercy, compassion, love, and the gospel of grace.

The Pharisees would see this older brother and they would say, "This is righteous indignation. This is finally in the story we have somebody who holds up honour."

A Pharisee would think that son should be dead. If you spend your money on harlots, you get killed.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21,

You get stoned to death. He should be dead. Instead of dead, look at the party.

- This is inappropriate.
- This is outrageous.

It's a shameful reaction by the son who is looking at the whole thing as shameful.

You killed the fattened calf for him.

Not really!

The fattened calf wasn't really killed for the son. It was killed for the father. The father is the one who gives and gets the credit!

He determines who is going to be reconciled and under what terms. He is the one who ran and embraced and kissed.

It really was a celebration of the father. But his anger has completely blinded him.

The elder brother has no knowledge of his father. The father is the main figure at the feast. The father is the one they're all honouring for such loving forgiveness.

The people will accept the younger son because it's against convention to accept him. It would be against the norm to accept him back under those conditions.

But they will because the father has accepted him.

So it's really the father who is being celebrated, just as in the end, in heaven, the joy of heaven, the eternal joy of the angels and all the redeemed that gather around the throne of God and even the joy of God is the joy that comes to God Himself for being the reconciler.

When we go to heaven, the direction of our praise isn't going to be toward the sinners. It's going to be toward the Saviour.

So here is this great feast and all the celebration honouring the father. At the same time is this son who heaps dishonour on the father simultaneously.

The party symbolizes all the sinners who have collected around God to honour Him for their salvation.

Outside are the Pharisees who are heaping scorn upon the Father God in Christ.

V 31, *“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.*

What a tender response?

That would be shameful in the eyes of the villagers. They would say, "Wait, you should slap this guy. Enough is enough, this mercy is getting a little over the top here."

huios, the more formal word for son.

But he says, "My child," **teknon**.

Eight times in this section!

it's speaking in grieving, painful, agonizing, compassionate love and mercy. He speaks to him in endearing terms and that's the heart of God toward a wretched hypocrite.

Is there any question about God being a loving, compassionate Saviour?

The son uses no title, no respect.

The son attacks the virtue, the integrity, the justice, and the righteousness of the father.

The son is saying in effect, "You need to be forgiven by me for the outrageous and unjust and dishonourable conduct that you have perpetrated."

Can you see the patience of God with the sinners and even hypocrites?

It is easier to be patient with prodigals than it is with hypocrites!

We all love a great story about a wicked, outrageous sinner who is converted, but we aren't nearly as excited about a hypocrite that's converted.

People who are in false religion don't come as often. In fact, it never says in all four gospels that a Pharisee believed on Jesus and was saved. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and it implies that he came. Later, Paul, the Pharisee, was saved on the Damascus Road. Those are the only two.

V 31, *"And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours."*

The father knows he is estranged. You have been around here superficially. Everything has always been available, it's all here.

You have always had it. If you ever wanted a relationship with me, I was here and everything I have was here.

"All that I have is yours."

The picture of the magnanimity of God and the endlessness of His grace and His resources.

It's all for all who come to Him.

It will never be yours with your attitude.

It will never be yours by works.

You will never earn it. But it's here if you ever want to establish a relationship with Me.

V 32, *It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'*

We should make merry!

It's not like we had an option.

for your brother was dead and is alive again and was lost and is found.'

We had no choice.

Why?

This is what causes joy to God.

This is heaven's joy.

- It can't be restrained.
- It can't be delayed.
- It can't be postponed.
- It can't be subdued.
- It can't be moderated.
- It can't be lessened.

Divine joy is released when one sinner repents and is reconciled. Heaven's joy will be released not just for a prodigal, not just for someone who is immoral, irreligious, and blatantly sinful, but for secret sinners, rebels, the religious, the moral, the hypocrites, the ones whose lawlessness is all on the inside.

God is saying here, Christ is saying,

- ✓ I go out into the street for the prodigal.
- ✓ I go out into the courtyard for you.
- ✓ I humble Myself and take on public shame for the prodigal.
- ✓ I humble Myself and take on public shame for you.
- ✓ I come with compassion and love and forgiveness
- ✓ I am ready to embrace you and to kiss you and to give you full sonship with all its privileges, not just if you are the prodigal, but even if you are the hypocrite.

God is inviting him to salvation!

You can come to the party if you choose. If you recognize your true spiritual condition you can take possession of everything that's always been there.

The younger son was overwhelmed with his father's grace. Immediately confessed his sin, confessed his unworthiness in the very most magnanimous ways and he received instantaneously forgiveness, reconciliation, sonship, all the rights and privileges that the father had at his disposal to give. He entered into the celebration of the father's joy. That is eternal salvation.

The elder son, the same tenderness, the same kindness, the same mercy, offered the same grace, reacts with bitter resentment, attacks the virtue, the integrity of the father. His father makes one final appeal. "My child, it's all here. We had to celebrate," implied, and we will celebrate for you too if you come.

Conclusion:

The story stops in verse 32.

Isn't that strange?

What do you have hanging in your mind right now?

Do you have a question there?

I do.

This is not an ending.

What happened?

What did he do?

You don't end a story without an ending.

It's like a joke with no punch line that lasts a long time

What did he do?

What did the older son do?

The guests are all there.

They are waiting.

They know what is going on outside because the word is going in.

Having embraced and kissed his younger son who repented, they want to know if he humbled himself, if he fell down before his father and sought grace for his long hypocrisy and bitter service.

They want to know if he was forgiven and reconciled and they would love to see the father come in with his arm around his son, bringing him to the head table and sitting him next to his brother.

Wouldn't that be great?

There are a lot of stories like this, you just sort of write your own ending.

The story is divided into two halves.

The first half has eight stanzas (12-19) they feature the younger brother.

The second half has eight stanzas (25-32) they have seven stanzas they feature the elder brother.

It should be eight and eight, but it's eight and seven.

In the symmetry of the story there is a lot of technical things that show you the symmetry of the story.

We have eight verse for the younger son and then suddenly strangely you have seven for the elder son. So even in hearing the story, reading the story you would say it should be eight and eight, because that would be the symmetry that would be designed into that kind of Middle Eastern prose.

The end isn't there.

There is one verse missing.

Now I would love to write one.

"The elder son fell on his knees before his father saying, 'I repent for my loveless, cold service, my pride and selfishness. Forgive me, father, make me a true son, take me to the feast.' At which point the father embraced and kissed him, took him in and seated him at his table by his brother and all rejoiced in the sons who had been reconciled to their loving father."

What would be your line to end this story?

Do you know what?

I don't get to write the end.

You also don't get to write the end.

Who wrote the end?

The Pharisees and the religious elite wrote the end.

Here is the end they wrote. "The elder son, being outraged at his father, picked up a piece of wood and beat him to death in front of everyone."

That is the ending they wrote.

That is the cross, and that's what they did just a few months after this. They congratulated themselves on their righteous act that preserved the honour of Israel and Judaism and true religion and God.

What would you do today?

Will you repent and ask God to take you as His true son?